

Partnerships in Forest and Fire Management Produce Lasting Impact across Landscapes and Society

Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest, <http://www.fs.usda.gov/arp>



AmeriCorps Crewmember Lauren Buczynski, 18, from Florida, during the pile burn. *Photo courtesy of Aaron Colussi*

At 7,800 feet, a half-mile hike can feel much longer. Now imagine trekking through up to a foot of snow in 30-degree temperatures wearing a full ensemble of wildland firefighting protective gear, a 40-50 pound pack, shovel and drip-torch. This is an average day for the prescribed fire crew based out of the Boulder Ranger District on the Roosevelt National Forest in Colorado.

It's mid-March and they are working on one of the last slash pile burns of the season. Slash piles are branches and small woody material piled-up for burning after a hazardous fuels project has removed or thinned trees in an area to reduce the wildfire potential.

The crew works diligently to burn as many piles as possible before spring conditions and warmer temperatures begin to melt the snow. The crew burns piles that have been curing on the landscape for about three years and are now dry enough to burn. They follow a specific prescription, which outlines the conditions required for

burning piles such as adequate snow surrounding the piles, favorable weather forecasts, smoke permits and adequate staff.

The burn boss, U.S. Forest Service firefighter Tim Egan, who is the leader of the operation, evaluates and monitors weather conditions and smoke dispersal to ensure the safety of both the public and his crew. Tim has been working with the fire and fuels crew since 2001. He leads several other experienced firefighters known as "squad bosses." These squad bosses supervise the work of a ten-person AmeriCorps crew.



Bruce Finley (rear left), a Denver Post reporter, interviews USFS Burn Boss Tim Egan (front left) as he monitors his crew and smoke dispersal during the pile burn. *Photo courtesy of Phil DeSenze, USFS*

The AmeriCorps crew, comprised of 18-24 year olds, began their work in October 2014. Since then, they have been clearing trails and building piles of downed debris and dead vegetation that will be burned in future years. Through this work they learn about the landscapes they are helping to manage and hopefully gain a passion for a career in conservation.



for the greatest good

Keona Williams, 24, from Maryland, lights about ten piles, ensuring they burn fully and safely. After a few hours, she will return to the mostly burnt piles to ensure most of the dead material is completely combusted. The crew will monitor lit piles daily until they are declared “out.”

Through partnerships like these, with AmeriCorps and other organizations, the Forest Service is working to cultivate the next generation of conservation leaders while managing America’s National Forests not only for today, but for generations to come.



AmeriCorps Crewmember Keona Williams, 24, after lighting her first slash pile of the day. *Photo courtesy of Phil DeSenze, USFS*